

FOR THE RECORD

The Report by the Social Democrats, U.S.A.
on the Resignation of Michael Harrington
and his Attempt
to Split the American Socialist Movement

Social Democrats, U.S.A.

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA Americans for Democratic Action
CDM Coalition for a Democratic Majority
DSF Democratic Socialist Federation
DSOC Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee
JLC Jewish Labor Committee
LID League for Industrial Democracy
NAC National Action Committee
NC National Committee
NDC New Democratic Coalition
NEC National Executive Committee
SDUSA Social Democrats, U.S.A.
SP Socialist Party
SI Socialist International
YPSL Young Peoples' Socialist League

Introduction

This report on the events leading up to the resignation of Michael Harrington from Social Democrats, U.S.A. (successor to the Socialist Party, U.S.A., and the Democratic Socialist Federation of the U.S.A.) and his subsequent attempt to set up a new organization can be read as an historical document. We are confident that it will also be of interest to those who appreciate the importance of the debate which has taken place within the American Socialist movement during the past several years.

SDUSA is part of the American mainstream, and the issues of deepest concern to its members affect the basic direction of American political life. The issues dividing the majority of SDUSA from the group led by Michael Harrington parallel, in a very striking way, the issues which have also divided, within the Democratic Party, the mainstream of the labor movement from the so-called "New Politics" movement of the liberal intellectuals.

This report is lengthy because we felt it necessary to clear the record once and for all. But the reader who has the patience to go through it in its entirety will find his time and effort well spent.

The dispute within the SDUSA has been fundamentally over two issues: 1) labor role and influence within the liberal coalition, and the related question of the role and influence of the affluent, educated elite making up the so-called New Politics movement; and (2) the attitude of socialists toward Communist totalitarianism.

Under the influence of the protest movement that developed in opposition to the war in Vietnam, Harrington departed from the traditional social democratic view of these two fundamental issues, as well as from his own past positions. Though he continued at times to give ritualistic support to the view that the American labor movement is a de facto social democratic movement that must be the central and dominant element of any democratic left coalition, in practice he took his cues from the trend-setters of the New Politics movement. Thus, he could write in 1972 that George Meany, the President of the AFL-CIO "has the same general outlook as the European social democracy," and yet, the following year, resign from SDUSA on the grounds that the organization, because of its "total identification" with Meany and the AFL-CIO leadership, "has been working to push American politics to the Right." Similarly, a month after he observed that Meany's views

are "quite analogous to that of mainstream European socialists," he charged that the SDUSA had moved "far to the right of the world socialist movement."

The reader might quite naturally conclude that an individual who treats political ideas so loosely is not worth reading about, let alone writing about. Yet we are not writing about an individual, but about an individual's attempt to split the American Socialist movement. Furthermore, Harrington's behavior, which is modeled after the politics of the liberal elite, is a microcosm which illuminates this important though problematic aspect of American political culture.

Harrington's eager acquiescence to the views of this political elite also explains the rapid vitiation of his opposition to totalitarianism. At a time when the courageous Soviet dissidents, Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn cried out to the West for support in their struggle for freedom, Harrington expended his political energies denouncing the Committee for Decente With Freedom (which was initiated by SDUSA). The Committee's statement merely insisted that American willingness to extend economic benefits to the Soviet Union be made contingent upon the USSR's adherence to even minimal standards of human rights and the ending of its "blockage of information flow," to use Solzhenitsyn's words, by which the Soviet bloc has maintained its isolation from the West. Yet Harrington termed these demands an instance of the SDUSA's "obsessive" "one-sided and fanatic anti-Communism" which, in his opinion, has led it to view "peace as a threat, not as an opportunity." We note with pride and some vindication that Sakharov's plea that detente be accompanied by democratization -- which so clearly parallels the Committee's statement -- has compelled Solzhenitsyn, among others, to recommend him for the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize.

Our report contains many organizational details, which is of course necessary in light of the charges that Harrington has made against SDUSA. But the reader should not lose sight of the deeper meaning of this dispute, for it is this that is of importance not only to members of SDUSA, but to a far wider audience -- all those who are concerned with the future of freedom, equality and peace in the world.

FOR THE RECORD

On June 21, 1973 Michael Harrington resigned from Social Democrats, U.S.A. His action came less than eight months after he had resigned as co-chairman, at which time he had stated his intention to remain within the organization:

...I will remain a member of the party even though my differences with its present leadership are profound. It is the member party in America of the Socialist International and, as a partisan of democratic socialism throughout the world, I want to be part of that movement even if, in the United States, a part of the opposition within it.

Only those unfamiliar with Harrington's activities within SDUSA will be bewildered by the disparity between his stated intention and subsequent deed. His writings have frequently reflected a point of view quite at variance with his political actions. Moreover, in the two years preceding his final resignation, he consistently misrepresented the actions and positions of the organization's leadership. On occasion those misrepresentations were issued in the form of "open letters" which were printed by publications unfriendly to SDUSA. Heretofore, in the hope of avoiding a split in our movement, we have refrained from offering a full reply. Now we feel it is time to set the record straight.

A final word of introduction is in order before presenting the facts behind Harrington's resignation and an analysis of the issues involved. In his letter of resignation as co-chairman, in his subsequent letter of resignation as a member, and in other documents he has circulated, Harrington has repeatedly insisted that his purpose is to preserve "the tradition of Debs and Thomas." "In resigning the national co-chairmanship," he wrote, "I hope--I feel--that I have vindicated the tradition of Debs and Thomas." At the last SDUSA convention he charged, "A tradition, the tradition of Debs and Thomas, was repudiated...The Convention Majority is liquidating the tradition of Debs and Thomas...Those who are loyal to the tradition of Debs and Thomas...must stick together and work collectively to see to it that a socialist presence remains in American life." In his letter of resignation from SDUSA, he stated, "I feel that any energies which I could devote to a problematic internal struggle to win the SDUSA back to the tradition of Debs and Thomas would be much better spent in working to build a [sic] effective socialist movement in the American mainstream...In presenting this resignation, then, I do not abandon the tradition of Debs and Thomas. On the contrary I take a step...to extend and deepen that tradition..." And so on.

It is not our intention to claim for ourselves exclusive right to this tradition, but only to deplore its invocation for factional purposes. Harrington himself said as much three years ago when he criticized David McReynolds (who was, as Harrington is today, an embittered drop-out) for referring to the majority in the Socialist Party (the former name of SDUSA) as the "former associates of Norman Thomas." Harrington's reply is as appropriate now as it was then:

I am quite willing to agree that all of us in the Socialist Party, of whatever faction, are "former associates of Norman Thomas," but I object to invoking the memory of that great man for factional purposes.

Harrington never defines what he means by "the tradition of Debs and Thomas," nor does he explain how he is preserving it in the process of publicly attacking and resigning from the movement they once led. He simply invokes the phrase, as if to place his actions and ideas above criticism. Such obscurantism is hardly in keeping with the high standard of discussion and criticism that has traditionally characterized the socialist movement. We hope to do our best to adhere to this standard in our effort to clarify the events that led to Harrington's resignation.

Background

Shortly before the 1960 Socialist Party, U.S.A. Convention, a number of SP members formed what was called the Realignment Caucus. The program of the caucus represented a sharp departure from the past SP practice of running independent candidates for office. It called upon Socialists to work in the Democratic Party, with a view toward realigning the elements within it. The objective was to nullify the veto power of the Southern conservatives and mold a new, progressive coalition consisting of the labor movement, liberals, and the civil rights movement.

The Realignment Caucus brought together long-standing SP members, such as Irwin Suall, Tom Brooks, and Seymour Kopilow, with former members of the Independent Socialist League (and its youth group, the Young Socialist League) which merged with the SP in 1958. Max Shachtman was the most prominent figure in the latter group, which also included Harrington, Tom Kahn, and Joan Suall. Norman Thomas, who made it a principle never to join any faction, nevertheless announced his support for the program of the Realignment Caucus.

In 1960 the Realignment Caucus was a minority in the SP which was still dominated by the anti-realignment grouping, most of which later became the Debs Caucus. Not until the 1968 Convention--after eight years of patient, tireless political work--did the Realignment Caucus win majority support for its program. At that convention Harrington defeated Bill Briggs, a leader of the independent electoral action viewpoint, for the position of National Chairman, and Penn Kemble (later succeeded by Joan Suall) was made National Secretary. In one sense, an aspect of "the tradition of Debs and Thomas," the tradition of independent electoral action by the SP, was "liquidated" when Harrington assumed the chairmanship.

Following this convention, differences within the Realignment Caucus, which had previously been contained by the common effort to organize a majority, slowly began to emerge. These differences were at first primarily over the Vietnam issue, but in a larger sense they reflected the growing division between the labor movement and the liberal community, a division which was tearing apart the very coalition the SP hoped to unite.

The differences on Vietnam were openly expressed on the floor of the 1970 Convention, but the Realignment Caucus agreed to sponsor a compromise Vietnam resolution in order to maintain a unified majority. The resolution--which was not a coherent political statement as much as an attempt to reconcile two divergent views--incorporated the position of Harrington and his followers for unilateral American disengagement from South Vietnam with the position of the current SD majority for a negotiated political settlement based on withdrawal of all foreign troops, a cease-fire by both sides, and a resolution of the conflict

in South Vietnam through genuinely democratic elections.

Harrington defended his support for the compromise resolution in an article in The Village Voice (July 2, 1970):

...there are elements of a Greek tragedy in Vietnam: two rights are in conflict with one another; the value of peace is at loggerheads with the value of democracy. If one supports withdrawal, there is a grave risk that a people will be delivered over to the totalitarian mercies of the Communists; but if the war is continued to avoid this evil, the slaughter of the innocents will certainly proceed and American power will maintain a regime in Saigon led by men who fought for French colonialism against the independence of their own homeland.

Harrington acknowledged that his own view in favor of "a phased unilateral withdrawal" was taken with full knowledge of "the moral complexities" inherent in the conflict. Of his opposition within the Realignment Caucus he wrote:

Their stress on the value of democracy leads them to place conditions on the American withdrawal--with regard to free elections, for instance--which, in my opinion would effectively keep us in Vietnam. I disagree with these comrades, but I do not regard them as pariahs, "war criminals," etc., but as socialists who, out of a genuine internationalism, have given the value of democracy, which we share, a primacy it does not deserve in this specific and horrible case....

At the convention we looked for a way to emphasize our agreements while we honestly stated our differences. We publicly recognized what divided us, we explicitly recognized the right of every member of the Party to continue to fight for his own, complete point of view within American politics, we committed the Party to a new and extensive discussion of the divergences within it, and we adopted a compromise resolution which satisfied no one but was livable for all. Were we the American government, or the opposition party, such an approach would be absurd. But as a relatively small group committed to making democratic socialism relevant in this huge and angry land, this mutual forbearance, this refusal to push factionalism to the knife, was justified.

...By reaching as we did, by encouraging every member to fight for his own position but to respect, and work with, those with whom he disagrees, I think we made an important contribution to the left as a whole on how to achieve a new majority. Unless the entire left learns to act in this spirit, then intransigent moralism will guarantee the victory of the right. [emphasis added]

The year following the 1970 Convention was marked by a moderate and fraternal expression of disagreements although it ended in the dissolution of the Realignment Caucus. As required by a Convention enabling resolution,

the Party expanded its discussion of foreign policy issues. A "Special Foreign Policy Issue" of Hammer & Tongs, the SP's internal discussion bulletin, was published; and at least two public forums were held, one in New York City at which three positions on Vietnam were represented, and the other at a National Conference held over Memorial Day weekend at which Harrington debated Alex Garber on Vietnam and isolationism. Moreover, New America, the bi-weekly newspaper of the SP, regularly published opposing views on Vietnam. Harrington admitted as much in a letter to National Committee members and alternates representing the Realignment Caucus point of view, dated May 18, 1971. His only complaint was not that his views on Vietnam had not been sufficiently published and circulated, but that they had not been adequately responded to by comrades holding a different position. Harrington was upset, in particular, that his article, "Socialists and Reactionary Anti-Communism," which appeared in Hammer & Tongs and was written in reply to a statement issued by eight comrades opposed to unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam, was not answered. This charge was true, but the reason for not answering was understandable. The enabling resolution had called for the discussion on foreign policy to be "carried on in a manner that is most fraternal." In the view of those comrades whose position he criticized, Harrington had violated this criterion--and socialist ethics as well--by misrepresenting their views and characterizing them as reactionary.

Whatever the merits of this particular issue, for the most part Vietnam was debated fraternally and Harrington was responded to on other occasions. The month before he issued his letter to the National Committee, two exchanges appeared in New America--one between Harrington and Paul Feldman (the Editor of New America) on the April 24th, 1971 anti-Vietnam demonstration, the other between Harrington and Tom Milstein on the relationship of Nixon's China policy to the war in Vietnam. The war remained a very hotly debated issue within the organization. Indeed, as some SP proponents of unilateral withdrawal often remarked in exasperation, the SP was one of the only places where Vietnam was still debated in post-Cambodia America!

The SP did more than debate the issue of Vietnam. Many of its members had been active in Negotiation Now, an organization which Harrington and his future opponents in the SP, together with Norman Thomas, helped found in 1966 to provide a vehicle to press for a settlement of the conflict. Writing in the Autumn, 1965 issue of Dissent, Norman Thomas set out the political point of view which provided the basis for the SP's work in Negotiation Now:

I think all opponents of our war in Vietnam and certainly the left would take what seems to me the most promising and reasonable line:

put every conceivable and possible effective pressure on the President to get him to implement his repeated desire for unconditional negotiations by dramatically calling for a cease-fire and the end to further outside aid, supervised by neutral nations, as a prelude to immediate negotiations in which the National Liberation Front should be recognized as a principal negotiator, not a tail to North Vietnam's kite. He should make it clear that we will withdraw all our military on the completion of negotiations, reasonably satisfactory to the Vietnamese people, and with strong guarantees against massacre or revenge. In general, there should be a return to the Geneva Line of 1954

which called for neutralization, plus offers of American economic aid.

This is the best and most likely line for withdrawal. It merits as far as is right our commitments to our present Vietnamese allies. It is based on our concern for peace in itself, and as a condition of growth of any other sort of real freedom.
[emphasis added]

Significantly, it was this view--in favor of a cease-fire, a negotiated political settlement, and the withdrawal of American forces "on the completion of negotiations"--which Harrington departed from in his advocacy of unilateral American withdrawal prior to a political settlement. Significantly also, it was this view which provided the basis of the actual settlement which was ultimately signed in early 1973. In his advocacy of immediate unilateral withdrawal, Harrington was no doubt motivated in part by his mistaken belief that "Richard Nixon does not know how to end the tragedy in Vietnam," and his equally mistaken view that "if Vietnamization does not succeed by the spring [of 1970] he [Nixon] will find himself, like Lyndon Johnson before him, as the leader of an embittered minority." Harrington's opponents were equally revolted by the killing in Vietnam, only they had a different strategy for ending the conflict as well as what proved to be a more accurate evaluation of the mood of the American people. They did not defend their position by invoking the name of Norman Thomas, as Harrington did in The New York Times Magazine (May 30, 1971) where he wrote that he was "personally saddened that the Socialist Party, of which I am Chairman, cannot continue the magnificent work of Norman Thomas in the peace movement because we have disagreed, honestly and openly, about crucial questions with regard to Vietnam." Had Thomas lived, his views on Vietnam might have changed, but until his death in January, 1969, he never once endorsed unconditional and unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam, but rather he continued to adhere to the Negotiation Now position. The fact that Harrington's opponents in the SP also continued to adhere to this position, after Harrington himself had abandoned it, adds another touch of irony to Harrington's claim to the Norman Thomas tradition.

Despite the considerable disagreements on Vietnam, there were still areas of agreement which, on occasion, enabled the two sides within the SP to unite in support of specific peace campaigns. The SP endorsed the 1969 Moratorium to end the war. Two years later, on July 29, 1971, the SP National Action Committee unanimously endorsed an international appeal issued by the United States Committee to End the Killing in Indochina, which urged all combatants in Vietnam--the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Vietcong--to begin an immediate cease-fire; it specifically urged the United States to take unilateral initiative by declaring a cease-fire, by seeking the agreement of both sides to make it permanent, and by specifying an early date after the permanent cease-fire by which its military withdrawal would be complete. In addition to endorsing the campaign, the National Action Committee requested Harrington to send a letter to all member parties of the Socialist International encouraging their participation in this campaign, and asking their cooperation in obtaining additional signatories.

Though differences within the SP were quite obvious and openly expressed, few people could have anticipated in the spring of 1971 that a major faction fight would soon begin. The disagreements that existed were considered normal in a democratic organization. There were complaints that Harrington was not functioning responsibly as National Chairman, as when he endorsed John Lindsay

for Mayor of New York and Bella Abzug for Congress without consulting the Party and in opposition to Party policy. Harrington was also criticized--informally, rather than officially--for attacking the SP in The New York Times Magazine in the statement already quoted. His reference to Thomas was considered particularly inappropriate since Thomas, as a matter of principle, had never criticized the SP in the non-Socialist press. But while Harrington was a difficult and frequently uncooperative National Chairman, it was never suggested that he step down, let alone that he be removed. The SP Majority, which included Harrington, had pledged to work together at least until the 1972 Convention, and nobody proposed breaking that pledge.

As in the SP, 1970 and 1971 saw full and earnest debate inside the Young People's Socialist League, the SP's youth group, but by the spring of 1971, the atmosphere in the YPSL had improved markedly. Though at its 1970 Convention the YPSL debated the same issues with the same fervor as the Party (and had also arrived at a similar compromise), by April, 1971 major disagreements within the organization were hardly perceptible. At a leadership conference of the YPSL held in New York City that month, a motion was unanimously passed to initiate a campaign to counteract growing neo-isolationist sentiment in the country. As if to caution against undue optimism, one YPSL at the conference remarked, that while the organization was more united than it had been for some time, he didn't rule out the possibility that divisions would reappear when competition started for the 1972 Democratic Presidential nomination. But his remark passed virtually unnoticed, a sign that few people were concerned about it, given the prevailing sense of unity.

It was in this hopeful atmosphere that the SP's Realignment Caucus decided officially, on July 9, 1971 to dissolve. The statement issued by the Caucus noted that the tasks it had set for itself had been fully accomplished. The view that socialists should work in the Democratic Party, it said, now "goes virtually unchallenged." The SP has been "put on a stable political and organizational course," has "an effective political and organizational leadership," as well as a "solid, healthy, and constructive socialist youth group." The statement took note of the differences which had existed within the Party, but it also affirmed that in two important areas the 1970 Convention Majority would continue to work together: 1) "That we provide the basis for the administration of the Party;" and 2) "That whatever our differences on Vietnam all of us recognize that the Party is bound by the Convention compromise resolution and none of us will use a momentary advantage to change that compromise." The statement expressed confidence that the dissolution of the Caucus would "not lead to debilitating factionalism but rather will further invigorate the Party ...through contributing to its internal political life..."

Why the Faction Fight?

Our task at this point becomes quite difficult. It is no longer enough to tell what happened. We must now attempt to interpret why certain events took place. On November 5, 1971, less than four months after the dissolution of the Realignment Caucus, Michael Harrington formally organized his faction in the SP and launched a major faction fight. The statement of July 9th dissolving the caucus, as we have seen, deplored "debilitating factionalism" and pledged the members of the former caucus to work together to assure a stable administration of the SP and to maintain the Vietnam compromise. The obvious question is what happened in those four months (less than four months, actually, since some time must be allowed for the preparation of a formal faction) which led

Harrington to conclude that he was no longer bound by the July 9th statement and that the time had come, in his own words, "to push factionalism to the knife."

In answering this question, we don't pretend to have full knowledge of the personal motivations that precipitated this event. The best we can do is to present an analysis which is based upon as full an understanding of the situation as possible. In our effort to assess the factors that brought on the faction fight in the SP, we make no pretense at impartiality. But we do feel we have been fair and judicious in this most complicated matter.

Vietnam: The False Issue

On September 30, 1971 Harrington introduced a draft statement on Vietnam in which he called for an abrogation of the 1970 compromise and its substitution by a resolution demanding that the U.S. "set an early and certain date for the complete withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam." In his statement he charged that since the 1970 SP Convention, "the opponents of withdrawal within the Party have acted as if the sections [of the compromise resolution] on unilateral American action...did not exist." He also said that "even if there were not such evidence of a flouting of the Convention position by leading bodies and comrades of the Party, our Convention resolution contains an important time factor, which requires us, not to change that position, but to apply it to a new situation. Specifically we said that if the Saigon regime did not 'implement a program of genuine democratization looking toward a negotiated settlement of the war' then America should withdraw forthwith."

Let us deal first with Harrington's second reason for abrogating the compromise. He misrepresents the "time factor" in the 1970 compromise resolution: the resolution was more vague than he claims it was. It did not call upon America to "withdraw forthwith" if genuine democratization did not take place in the South. It said only that "the Thieu-Ky regime should be allowed to stand on its own as soon as possible," with the pace of withdrawal conditioned by the protection of American troops and the offer of refuge to any South Vietnamese who wishes sanctuary in the U.S. Significantly, no time limit was set for when the trial period for the South Vietnamese regime would end. The reason for that is clear: the supporters of the resolution, Harrington included, agreed to abide by the compromise until the 1972 SP Convention when a new resolution could be introduced. Though some comrades refuted Harrington's charge that no democratization had taken place in the South, the issue was not germane. The issue was not whether Thieu and Ky had democratized, but whether Harrington had any right, on this basis, to break the compromise. Clearly, he didn't. Finally, the resolution was a compromise, which is to say that two different positions were represented. Harrington lifted the "time factor" out of his section, ignoring the fact that the other section demanded "that all other foreign troops must be withdrawn from South Vietnam--especially those of North Vietnam." Harrington was violating the compromise simply by ignoring the other side of the resolution.

Harrington's other stated reason for abrogating the compromise--the charge that his opponents had not adhered to it--would be valid if it could be substantiated. But again Harrington was grasping at straws. The only alleged violation he could point to was the Statement on Socialism, Democracy and Peace submitted by the SP to the Socialist International meeting in Helsinki, May 25-27, 1971. Harrington claimed that his position was ignored in this statement, and that therefore he himself was no longer bound by the compromise. But

the SP Statement was not inconsistent with the compromise resolution, as we will demonstrate below. Furthermore, Harrington's charge was made against a statement dated May 25-27, a full month and a half before Harrington subscribed to the statement dissolving his caucus and specifically pledging all former caucus members to abide by the compromise. If Harrington felt that the compromise had already been broken, why would he pledge himself to maintaining it in July, only to break that promise in September?

One might concede that mitigating circumstances--in particular, a persisting belligerent and rigid attitude on the part of Harrington's opposition--might justify his belated reaction. But just the opposite was the case. At the National Committee [NC] meeting of July 11, 1971, Harrington charged that a resolution originally adopted by the National Action Committee [NAC] and introduced by Penn Kemble, calling for support of the South Vietnamese trade union movement and free elections in South Vietnam, was in violation of the 1970 compromise. Though Kemble and others took issue with this charge, and though a majority on the NC were in favor of the Kemble resolution, it was withdrawn in favor of a resolution introduced by Harrington on "Vietnamese Self-Determination," an excerpt from the statement "To End the Killing" issued by the National Committee for a Political Settlement in Vietnam. After the Harrington resolution was adopted with two amendments (accepted as friendly), twelve members (representing a majority) of the NC who supported the Kemble resolution introduced the following statement into the minutes:

In the interests of Party unity and effective efforts by the Socialist Party to press for democratic elections in South Vietnam, we support the Harrington resolution as amended by Milstein and Feldman on elections in Vietnam--an issue we introduced in the NC discussion with the NAC resolution May 13, 1971, which we think is clearer and more consistent with the Party's Convention resolution on Vietnam and democratic principles.

This instance of conciliation was followed several weeks later, as we have already noted, by a unanimous NAC endorsement of an international appeal to end the killing in Indochina which, if anything, leaned toward Harrington's position on Vietnam. Yet two months later Harrington declared the Vietnam compromise null and void because of a statement issued in May for submission to the Socialist International meeting in Helsinki.

The statement in question, which was used by Harrington as a basis for breaking the compromise, was drafted by the SP's International Affairs Committee and presented to the NAC for discussion and revision. At the time Harrington did not sit on the NAC, not because he was prevented from doing so but because he didn't want to. The final draft of the statement, which went through a number of revisions, was not completed until the day before the delegation left for Helsinki. Harrington was shown this draft, but he didn't have time to read it and make comments. What is clear is that if he had been a member of the NAC, any misunderstanding could have been avoided. After this incident, he finally agreed to serve on the NAC, and he was elected to that body at the National Committee meeting held July 10th.*

*Harrington, it should be noted here, was not a very easy person to consult with, and not just because he was not on the NAC. Nat Hentoff, a writer for The Village Voice who is friendly to Harrington's point of view, commented after he himself had had a misunderstanding with Harrington that "Mike is one of the hardest people I know to reach on the phone." Harrington's comrades didn't have an

Furthermore, it is simply not true that the statement submitted at the Helsinki meeting violated the 1970 Convention resolution. The statement strongly criticized U.S. policy in Vietnam, described both the Saigon and Hanoi regimes as undemocratic, and emphasized the need for a political rather than a military victory by either side. It is true that the statement did not call for unilateral American withdrawal, which was Harrington's side of the compromise. But neither did it call for the withdrawal of "all other foreign troops," which was the other side of the compromise. Four members of the U.S. delegation to Helsinki described their reason for the omission of both positions:

...while both of these admittedly contradictory formulations might have been quoted in what, after all, was not a resolution on Vietnam, but a statement attempting to put this and other issues in an International framework, the final product, we fear, would have been incomprehensible to the other delegates. The Party's ambiguous position on unilateral withdrawal we thought was adequately covered in the statement's formulation, which leans over backward to make concessions to Comrade Harrington's viewpoint by calling for a settlement based on "an agreement to end United States military involvement in South Vietnam [note no reference is made to bilateral actions by the North Vietnamese troops, although the Party's resolution is more even-handed in this regard] and North Vietnamese involvement in Laos and Cambodia." [The latter formulation was based on the Party's resolution on the spread of the conflict in Cambodia.]

Even if we grant that the statement in question leaned somewhat in the direction of Harrington's opponents, it is still reasonable to question whether this would justify Harrington in not merely abandoning the compromise but also launching a major faction fight. As Paul Feldman pointed out at the time, echoing in many respects Harrington's article in The Village Voice the year before:

Vietnam, of course, is a very emotional issue for socialists, as war must be for those who abhor it. But it still remains true that a bitter factional struggle in the Party will not bring an end to that war one second sooner and could, if we are not careful, wreck the one socialist instrument we have

easier time of it. This, combined with his absence from the SP's NAC, made consultation difficult and some misunderstandings inevitable.

One such misunderstanding occurred when Harrington was elected a delegate to the Helsinki Council meeting, but was not informed of this by the National Secretary, Joan Suall, until it was too late for him to make plans to go. Suall had spoken to Harrington three times before the NAC elected the delegation, and he said repeatedly that it was very unlikely he would be able to go to Helsinki. This was the reason for her failure to inform him of his election as a delegate, an oversight which she apologized for profusely. Despite Suall's apologies and willingness to take the full blame for this error, and despite the fact that the NAC did, after all, elect Harrington a delegate, he continually referred back to this incident as proof of the majority's "factional" behavior. The point is, however, that if he had sat on the NAC, the misunderstanding would never have occurred.

for working for peace. As we all know, it is easy to start such factional conflicts but harder to stop them. They tend to take on a life of their own beyond that intended by those who open the Pandora's box. The action of either side to overturn the compromise Vietnam resolution adopted at our last Convention would, I fear, be such a fateful decision for our movement. [emphasis added]

Why did Harrington make this "fateful decision"? Indeed we feel that we have amply demonstrated that it was, in fact, his decision, taken unilaterally without provocation by his opponents, at least with regard to the Vietnam compromise. The reader should also note that he took this decision at a time of diminishing American involvement and casualties on both sides in Vietnam, when there were 200,000 fewer troops in Vietnam than in 1970 when Harrington had so forcefully defended the compromise.

It is our view that his decision to abrogate the compromise and launch the faction fight had little to do with Vietnam at all. The compromise was symbolic, as Harrington himself had pointed out, of a desire to maintain a unified socialist movement. Harrington's moral posturing on Vietnam, which violated his own standard of Socialist political behavior (the role of Socialists, he said the year before, is to encourage the "de-escalation of moralistic rhetoric"), was merely an effort to obscure his full responsibility for breaking the compromise, and it was also a tactic to mobilize support for the faction fight ahead.

The Labor Movement Versus the New Politics: The Crucial Conflict

If Vietnam was not the issue, then what was?

In Harrington's letter of May 18, 1971 to the NC members and alternates of the Realignment Caucus, he outlined the fundamental issues which later provided the basis for his faction fight. The letter was written in a generally moderate tone, unlike so many of his subsequent statements. He expressed the hope that his letter would "become the start of a discussion by all of the comrades of the Tendency and by the entire Party" and also his confidence "that we have enough political maturity to discuss complicated, and often controversial, issues without getting into a destructive faction fight....Between now and November, 1972, the unity achieved by the SP Majority must be maintained with the greatest care." He proposed that the Realignment Caucus become "more of a coalition than a tendency," but a coalition "based on a continuing acceptance of the compromises reached at the 1970 Convention....I honestly and sincerely hope--and believe--that the issues which I have raised here can be discussed without a destructive faction fight. I emphatically think our debates must not be allowed to endanger our practical and political unity in the coming period." This coming period was to last only a few months. Harrington had no sooner raised his issues than he bared his factional knife.

The issues he raised were not without theoretical significance, and under non-factional circumstances, they could have become the basis for a useful internal discussion. Harrington made two basic points in his letter. First, responding to a statement by Tom Kahn that the socialist movement is "fundamentally rooted in the organized working class and fundamentally rooted nowhere else," Harrington said that socialists must also address themselves to

members of the "new, growing non-blue collar stratum," and second, while he acknowledged that the American labor movement is "a de facto social democratic movement in the United States," he cautioned against a tendency he perceived on the part of some comrades to identify the labor movement with socialism, and the future of socialism in America with the leadership of the AFL-CIO.

There's a great deal of confusion in Harrington's letter and many important terms were only vaguely defined--but this is only to say that his ideas, as well as the ideas of the comrades he was addressing, could have benefited from an open, healthy discussion. (His implication that his comrades were afraid to debate "complicated, and often controversial, issues" and preferred "sweeping these problems under the carpet," is an example of a characteristic though unfounded Harrington insult. He was quite aware, or should have been, that not only Max Shachtman--who, as Harrington once acknowledged, had "tutored me in the rich intellectual heritage and the immediate relevance of the labor and socialist movements"--but also many other comrades, including YPSL's, would have been delighted to debate, as they frequently did at SP meetings.) For example, he never adequately defined what, for him, was the crucial distinction between socialism and social democracy, but only implied that social democracy was a form of "laborism" while socialism has to do with deriving "a vision of fundamental change from the existing struggles of the trade unionists." Harrington had borrowed this definition of socialism from Shachtman who used it to criticize utopian socialists who refused to get involved in the real struggles of the working class. Ironically, Harrington here used this definition to describe a form of socialism that has more in common with the utopians than with the kind of involved socialist movement Shachtman hoped to build. The intent of Harrington's distinction between laborism and socialism is clarified by his remark that "If we were in Europe, then it would be natural for an active trade unionist to be a socialist." He was not here suggesting that the European continent is covered with a multitude of visionary trade unionists, but rather that in Europe trade unionists are members of large social democratic parties while in America they are not. Thus, for Harrington, because of the SP's small size, the only thing an American socialist can do effectively is to "present a socialist perspective"; which is to say, to write books and speak out for socialism, rather than to get involved in the real struggles of the labor movement. It was precisely this separation of socialism and laborism, of theorie and praxis, that Shachtman (like Marx before him) hoped to prevent and which Harrington, in a confused and not thoroughly formulated way, was beginning to assert.

Harrington was also exceedingly unfair in claiming that his comrades ignored members of the "non-blue collar stratum," since he was certainly aware of the leading roles many of them played in such white collar unions as the American Federation of Teachers. Moreover, he described the position they allegedly held toward the "non-blue collar stratum" both as "right wing sectarianism" and "to the traditionalist Left of the entire European Social Democracy." Harrington is generally unclear on what he means by left and right, as are many liberals who criticize the labor movement for being too conservative and unresponsive to new trends, and at the same time too radical in its assertion of working-class rights and demands.

The real problem with Harrington's letter--as with so much of what he writes--is that for all its scholastic argumentation, one cannot avoid the impression that a good deal was left unsaid, or said only in the most Aesopian language. For example, he wrote in the letter that "I am in agreement with about 95% of what Tom [Kahn] said and I will therefore focus on the narrow, but signifi-

cant, 5% of disagreement." George Meany, he wrote, "has played an enormously progressive and historic role within the labor movement and...his leadership has been crucial in the emergence of a de facto social democratic movement in the United States....I am for the merest laborism as against middle class liberalism or any form of conservatism." Noble sentiments, to be sure, but how could this "5% of disagreement," in only four months time, become the basis for starting "a destructive faction fight," especially a faction fight in which the definitive issue was to be Harrington's refusal, when push came to shove, to support "the merest laborism against middle class liberalism"?

Harrington's support for the merest laborism was soon to be tested. On June 13 the SP's NAC voted to allow the National Secretary to work part-time over the summer in the political campaign of two comrades--one of them the editor of New America--who were running for Democratic district leadership on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The campaign was deemed to have national significance in that it represented an effort to apply the SP's strategy of coalition politics in an area dominated by two divisive political tendencies in the Democratic Party--one a mixture of New Left and Old Stalinist elements, the other a relatively more moderate New Politics grouping that was part of the New Democratic Coalition (NDC).

It can legitimately be questioned on tactical grounds whether going into this political campaign was the most effective way to apply the coalition strategy. Though the campaign received considerable labor and liberal backing, the fact that it was carried out in neighborhoods that were the stronghold of the opposition made it an uphill fight from the beginning. The campaign also required the diversion of a great deal of the movement's personnel and energies away from other important functions.

But Harrington chose to base his criticisms not on tactical but on procedural grounds. He charged that the campaign "was already in swing" three months before the NAC decision of June 13th, and that national resources of the SP had been committed to it "without seeking a discussion, a vote, or even communicating what was going on." These charges were totally unfounded--and not a little bit ironic coming from a National Chairman who on several occasions had endorsed candidates not supported by the SP without any consultation at all. It would overburden this report with detail to describe the full extent of consultation and discussion with appropriate SP bodies which preceded the NAC decision of June 13th. Discussions took place at the New York City Local's City Committee, the New York City Joint SP-YPSL Action Committee, and at a special New York City membership meeting, as well as at the YPSL NAC and the New York City At-large Chapter of the YPSL. All of these bodies gave their approval before the NAC and the NC (on July 10th) voted to commit national resources. In response to Harrington's charges, Penn Kemble observed, "in my years in the Socialist Party and the YPSL, I can't remember, nor do I believe can Comrade Harrington, any instance of greater organizational consultation over a political campaign or even an ordinary project before Party members participated as individuals or Party resources were committed."

Harrington's procedural charges, while unfounded, did serve to obfuscate his political opposition to the campaign. Outside the SP he maintained close ties with the NDC, and while he himself did not endorse the New Politics candidates in the campaign, many of his followers in the SP and the YPSL did (and some even worked for them). It would have been understandably difficult, if not impossible, for him to reconcile his theoretical support for "the merest

laborism against middle class liberalism" with his refusal, in a concrete situation, to support his own comrades against the narrowest and most elitist middle class liberal grouping in the Democratic Party. In due time he was to resolve this conflict by adapting the theories he put forth inside the SP to the political associations he maintained outside of it.

In the months following the July 10-11th National Committee meeting, the political debate on the SP's strategy toward the Democratic Party sharpened. The NC itself adopted a tentative and non-controversial resolution introduced by Norman Hill. It said that since no Democratic candidate had yet emerged to champion "a strategy that would move liberalism toward a social-democratic program, solving its internal divisions and confusion and again making it a vital force in American politics," the SP should concentrate on rebuilding the progressive coalition around a democratic left program and postpone any endorsement of a candidate until after the Democratic Party Convention.

At the July 29th NAC Harrington introduced a draft statement on Democratic Party strategy with which many comrades took issue. It was agreed that two statements would be inserted into the minutes: Harrington would submit his own, with some alterations; and Penn Kemble would draft a statement incorporating the opinions that had been expressed which differed from Harrington's.

Harrington's one-page statement was little more than a reiteration of what, by 1971, had become the cliches of the movement: "the Democrats are the party of liberalism, even though they have a conservative wing, and the Republicans are the party of conservatism even though they have a liberal wing"; socialists must "work with non-socialists to transform [the Democratic Party] into a party of unambiguous liberal. "organized workers will be the crucial component in any progressive strategy"; and so forth.

These rhetorical flourishes were meaningless in that they did not address the very real conflict then taking place within the Democratic Party between the labor movement and the New Politics. At only one point did Harrington deal with this question. He did so in the most oblique fashion by stressing the importance of arguing "against any tendencies toward Fourth Partyism." Though he was no more explicit than this, his meaning was unmistakable. He was not referring to a split-off by the Wallacites who already had a Third Party. He was only concerned about a split-off of New Politics liberals who were at the time threatening to form a Fourth Party if the Democrats nominated a candidate unsuitable to their taste. However, Harrington, not only in his NAC statement but also in his published writings, seemed oblivious to a major dilemma that would arise with the advent of a New Politics split-off: a strategy of accommodation to the New Politics to prevent a Fourth Party split would only increase the defection of working and lower-middle-class Democrats to a Wallace Third Party. His exclusive concern with keeping the most divisive elements of middle-class liberalism in the Democratic Party, even at the risk of wrecking the Party's working class base, was the motivation of his NAC statement--and of his political actions in the weeks ahead. In a column published shortly after that meeting, he decided that Senator Henry M. Jackson, whose fledgling Presidential campaign had already received significant labor backing although it was strongly opposed by the New Politics, was beyond the limits of consideration as the Democratic nominee.

Harrington's NAC statement was answered unambiguously by Penn Kemble and Paul Feldman. We quote it at length because it more or less expresses the views of many who opposed Harrington and because Harrington quoted extensively from it in his statement announcing the formation of his faction:

...we should not give a major priority to arguing against a fourth party strategy being threatened by some of the leaders of the [New Politics] movement unless they get their way at the Democratic Convention. We should instead forthrightly and vigorously fight those who advocate this strategy as they consciously or unconsciously, harm the cause of liberalism and are the handmaidens of conservatism. We should bid them adieu rather than begging them to stay because their disdain for the common man and their confrontationist and divisive tactics in the Democratic Party and on the streets have driven countless workers and lower-middle-class voters to political apathy or worse, into the arms of Nixon and Wallace. In such a principled and honest struggle against those in the Democratic Party who advocate a rule-or-ruin strategy, we can most effectively win over the best of their followers who today do not understand the destructive and elitist nature of such a course. But, far more important to the hopes for social progress, by adopting such a policy, we can effectively help counter the defections from liberalism and the Democratic Party of those who constitute its mass base (and the potential for a mass social-democratic movement) and who will determine the difference between a Democratic or Republican victory in 1972, and thereafter, socialism's future in the United States.

The issue of New Politics veto rights in the Democratic Party was the central issue dividing Harrington and his opponents. When Harrington formed his caucus in November, he called it the Coalition Caucus, a name which implied his contention that his opponents, because of their willingness to "bid adieu" to the New Politics rather than to grant them a veto right in a coalition with labor, had abandoned coalition politics altogether. Harrington stressed the emotional issue of Vietnam in conducting his faction fight, but this issue was primarily important for him only in light of the domestic political conflict between labor and the New Politics. He said, as much in his "open letter" announcing the formation of his caucus:

...if we are to have anything at all to say to the mass constituency of middle class liberalism and radicalism, we must be clear on the issue of Vietnam. Even if the war ends or if Nixon succeeds in depoliticizing it in the nation as a whole, it is going to remain as a litmus test for some of the most idealistic politicals [sic] in the country for a generation to come. If there is any possibility of the SP rebuilding its shattered credibility in this area, we must face up to the issue of Vietnam.

Harrington's charge that his opponents had abandoned coalition politics was one of his more egregious misrepresentations. Indeed, one of his leading opponents, Bayard Rustin, was widely recognized as unquestionably the most prominent spokesman for coalition politics in the United States. In a statement issued subsequent to the formation of Harrington's caucus and co-authored with Max Shachtman, Rustin enunciated his conception of the coalition strategy:

A coalition clearly implies an alliance of forces whose interests are, to an adequate extent, common to all, but yet not identical nor uniform. In our political "coalition," a group of intellectuals and a union of a million members, a department of college

professors and a Negro organization of half a million, are not equal in numbers, influence, political experience, discipline--in a word, in social weight and durable political power--and they cannot be. This is or should be obvious to any thinking person, let alone to any socialist. Accordingly, in our conception we assign more importance to the labor movement than to any other force in the coalition. Thus not only for strategic reasons but for reasons consistent with our democratic principles, the largest element in the coalition deserves greater influence.

...The middle classes, including the academic community, intellectuals in general, etc., decidedly belong in the political "coalition." We do not for a moment think of excluding them from it. It is an altogether different matter to think of the academic or intellectual community in terms of demanding for it a veto right in the "coalition." That we oppose. In our opinion, it is wrong in theory, wrong in principle, wrong in practice. No authentic labor movement would ever agree to that. It is not in the nature of trade unions to grant that right. The AFL-CIO will not grant it; the UAW will not grant it; the Teamsters will not grant it; the Steelworkers will not grant it; no union will grant it. And that is precisely what the conception of equality for the affluent middle class "conscience constituency" in the "coalition" would mean, let alone the concept of primacy. It was never a part of our view of "coalition politics." It is not part of our movement's view today. We trust it will not become the view of American socialism.

Harrington formed his caucus in opposition to this view. He conducted an all-out faction fight to defeat those in the SP who held this view. And today, after having been democratically defeated within the organization, he has decided to split the movement and continue his fight outside of it.

Unity with the Democratic Socialist Federation

Despite the political differences which existed within the SP in the fall of 1971, it is unlikely that Harrington would have begun his faction fight when he did had it not been for one additional factor: the imminent prospect of unity with the Democratic Socialist Federation (DSF).

The DSF was the descendant of the wing that split from the Socialist Party in 1936 when the "Militants" led by Norman Thomas, gained control of the Party. The DSF was then known as the "Old Guard"; it differed from the "Militants" wing on a number of vital issues. It gave critical support to Roosevelt's New Deal, was unequivocally opposed to united fronts with Communists, and later advocated collective security against Hitler, while the SP leadership did not, at first, support WW II. When it left the SP, it took the leadership of the Forward Association, publishers of The Jewish Daily Forward, the Workmen's Circle (a large fraternal order), and many important officials of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union.

The first efforts to reunite the two organizations took place in 1956. At the time only a minority of the Social Democratic Federation (then the name of the DSF) supported unity and it split the SDP to join the SP. The SP itself was in favor of full reunification. Thus when unity became a real possibility

following the SP's 1968 Convention and the victory of the Realignment Caucus, the SP was already on record for more than a decade in favor of reuniting with the DSF.

During late 1969 informal discussions between several DSF and SP leaders resulted in an SP National Committee resolution in November of that year which officially called for the initiation of joint activities and discussions between the two organizations. Soon afterwards, the DSF NEC responded favorably to the overtures of the SP. Subsequently, two public meetings were held -- on May 26 and November 22, 1970 -- and their success led to further informal talks aimed at cementing the bonds of comradeship. A small DSF delegation attended the SP's 1970 Convention, and a fraternal SP delegation was warmly received at the DSF's 1971 Convention. In 1970 the National Committee of both the SP and the DSF designated sub-committees to pursue unity discussions and report back regularly to their organizations.

Thus, at the SP National Committee meeting on March 27, 1971, a resolution was adopted (supported by Harrington) which called for the "earliest and smoothest possible unification of the two organizations." At that meeting, also, Harrington was designated to present greetings to the Federation's forthcoming convention. The DSF, at its national sessions on May 25, 1971, granted authority to the NEC "to explore the possibility of unity with the Socialist Party."

Thereupon, negotiation committees began talks on June 9, which at succeeding meetings considered the structure, membership, political positions, and other matters essential to consummating unity.

According to the section of the minutes of the SP's National Committee meeting of July 10-11 dealing with the unity negotiations, "it was the opinion of all present at the first meeting [in June] that there were no obstacles to unification and that our next meeting, planned for August, should concern itself with the specific procedures and details of bringing about the unity desired." During the discussion of unity at the NC, Harrington said that the negotiations toward unity, which he favored, should take into account, in determining representation on committees, the political differences within the SP on such matters as Vietnam. There was general agreement on this point, and to assure that Harrington's views would be fully represented in the negotiations, he was elected to the negotiating committee.

As we have already noted, in the weeks following the July NC, the members of the former Realignment Caucus continued to work together on specific issues (such as Vietnam), even though their differences on domestic politics became sharper. These differences were only beginning to be articulated, and few people anticipated that in a matter of weeks Harrington would transform the sober "discussion" he call for in May into an all-out faction fight. Even if he were planning a faction fight, an eventuality which the rest of the SP's leadership hoped to avoid, it is doubtful he would have acted so precipitately if he had not suddenly changed his attitude toward unity.

Though Harrington was a member of the unity negotiating committee, he never attended a meeting with the DSF. He did, however, attend one meeting of the SP's subcommittee. That was on September 22, when it was reported to him that the DSF was agreeable to an early merger with the SP at a unity convention during the winter. At that meeting he became visibly upset and asserted that unity was being "rushed," even though negotiations had already been in process for a year and a half. It was not the proposed merger terms which concerned Harrington: it had been tentatively agreed that he would remain National Chairman and that the DSF, which claimed a membership equal to that of the SP, would get only fifteen seats on a thirty-seven member NC. What concerned him was the prospect →

of unity itself. The meeting on the 22 ended with Harrington requesting that his comrades not take further action on unity until they heard from him. This was agreed to. The following week he sent his message. It was not an alternative proposal but a factional bomb presented in the form of a resolution abrogating the Vietnam compromise.

It's not very difficult to understand Harrington's reasons for acting as he did. He feared that the DSF was politically closer to his opponents, and that if he did not make his move before merger, his position would be too weak ever to do so afterwards. He could not state this position openly, since it would be politically damaging to seem so self-serving and baldly factional. But to state it any other way was to risk seeming sophistic and somewhat dishonest. Harrington chose the latter course, and his reasoning was transparent, one would like to think, even to some of his most devoted followers.

Having voted in March for "the earliest and smoothest possible unification in November" Harrington characterized that proposal as "instant unity," "shot-gun unity." He himself, he claimed, was for a "solid and lasting unification" which could only be achieved "when the groupings within the SP have democratically established their relative weight and position." He never adequately explained how this democratic establishment of relative weight and position--a euphemism for what only a few months earlier he had called "a destructive faction fight"--would promote "a durable unity." It was evident--or should have been to anyone with a modicum of common sense--that a disruptive factional brawl would hardly create an atmosphere conducive to merger with another organization, especially if the brawler was bent on changing the political basis upon which the merger had been negotiated.

Harrington strained even further in his effort to be "fair" to the DSF in his Hammer & Tongs article of November 18, 1971. "Is it fair to the comrades of the DSF," he asked, "to rush them into a unity which will be a moment in an internal political dispute? Do we want to invite them to a unity Convention at which there will be the most vigorous, and even unhappy, caucusing...?" One wonders whether it is not unfair to start the fight after the invitations have already gone out, and whether it is not also unfair (to employ the mildest possible term) to then adopt a virtuous posture of fraternal concern.

For all of Harrington's rhetoric about desiring "a durable unity," the simple reality was that from the moment he threw down the gauntlet, the possibility of achieving any unity at all hinged on his defeat in the faction fight. This became thoroughly obvious when Harrington blocked with his former opponents in the Debs Caucus on the unity issue (as well as on political issues such as Vietnam). They were openly opposed to unity per se, but at the November 6-7 National Committee they supported Harrington's "pro-unity but delay" formulation and proposed no anti-unity statement on behalf of the Debs Caucus.

Harrington's new allies were strange bedfellows, indeed. They were completely opposed to any version of coalition politics, Harrington's or Rustin's. (This adds a special touch of irony to Harrington's moral crusade against the alleged opponents of coalitionism in the majority.) Harrington had previously attacked them as sectarian, while they accused him of turning his back on Debs' traditions of independent political action. After they lost control of the SP in 1968--to Harrington, of all people--they published a pamphlet titled "The Debs Caucus--A Party Within a Party" which described the Realignment and Debs Caucuses as "mutually exclusive," declared their intention to act "as

though (the Debs Caucus) and only it, were the SP-USA," and announced their policy that "people could belong to it without having to be members of the Socialist Party." The pamphlet also expressed the hope "that the Realignment Caucus may break up, in which case half of it could well join with the Debs Caucus to regain control of the SP, forcing the other half of the Realignment Caucus out." (emphasis added) It was this unholy alliance which materialized, at Harrington's initiative, in the fall of 1971.

In the weeks preceding the November NC, several leading unity supporters met with Harrington to learn if his group wanted additional representation on the NC in return for supporting unity, and to determine what other concerns might be motivating him. At these informal meetings Harrington rejected all proposals for a reasonable compromise and offered none of his own. Faced with a seemingly inevitable confrontation, the unity supporters concluded that for the merger to be consummated with a minimum of recrimination and charges of "steamrolling," a Party referendum on the issue would be necessary. With the support of six locals, they introduced a resolution which was passed at the November NC calling for "unity at the earliest practicable date" and for a membership referendum to settle the issue.

On the eve of this NC Harrington organized his faction in the SP, and on the same evening, a parallel faction was organized in the YPSL. Two of Harrington's NC allies attended the faction meeting and played a moderating role, but the mood of the meeting was not one of moderation. Also present were members of the old "Meier-Mendelson caucus" which had opposed Harrington at previous SP Conventions and had organized against the United Federation of Teachers leadership during the 1968 teachers strike. It was the "Meier-Mendelson" group which, in the early and mid-sixties resisted the formation of a stable majority in the SP and the YPSL. Its factional activities contributed to the collapse of the YPSL in that period, and its reappearance at Harrington's caucus meeting symbolized the renewed threat of destructive factionalism which could destroy a stable majority and irreparably damage the Party. The bulk of participants at the caucus meeting were YPSLs, many of them new and impressionable members who had not yet had a chance to learn anything about the views of "the other side" except what they had been told by the organizers of the Harrington faction. It was this new faction which joined with the Debs Caucus to block unity in the name of delaying it.

Virtually all of the SP's prominent leaders (including A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin), with the exception of Harrington, supported the NC majority's unity proposal, as did the YPSL National Action Committee and even some of Harrington's political sympathizers such as Harry Fleischman. Writing on behalf of the supporters of Unity Now, A Philip Randolph stated:

We believe that Party growth is in no way incompatible with the healthy airing of differences among us. On the contrary, both must go on at the same time. What we must not do is turn completely inward while conducting our debates, thereby creating an unhealthy factional hothouse. The history of our movement shows that that course serves only to magnify disagreements and to distort our sense of reality by isolating us from the world outside.

When the votes were counted, the supporters of Unity Now won by a convincing margin of 58% to 42%. In view of the "shotgun unity" engineered between the "Coalition Caucus" and the Debs Caucus on the merger issue, it is

evident that Harrington did not speak even for 42% of the SP, but for a good deal less than that.

Harrington was soon to suffer a second major defeat, this time at the YPSL National Convention which was held in December in California. One of his major contentions was that while he might not speak for a majority in the SP, he did have strong support among the youth. But his faction in the YPSL, also called the "Coalition Caucus," was a pathetically abortive effort. Organized on November 5th, it was disbanded less than two months later after a dismal performance at the YPSL Convention. The caucus lost the crucial vote on Vietnam by 71-30. (The majority, which had the support to pass a resolution to its liking, instead voted to maintain a compromise position similar in many respects to the one adopted by the SP.) Even more, it was riddled by internal dissension and crippled by the lack of any forceful and articulate leadership.

Harrington came to the four-day Convention for only one evening. He had been scheduled to speak at the Convention for months, though unlike the other speakers, he did not tell the Convention organizers what his topic would be. He had been requested not to bring SP factionalism into the YPSL, but when he arrived at the Convention, he informed the YPSL National Chairman that he would speak "on the point of view of my faction." He added, "I didn't come 3,000 miles to give a non-factional speech." If anything, Harrington's speech lost him support in the YPSL. It was filled with superficial analyses which were easily challenged from the floor. In response to one question asking him to define the "new class" in which he placed so much hope, he said it consisted of such groups as "nurses, teachers, and aerospace workers." The YPSL's were not impressed, and Harrington's caucus suffered. He left as quickly as he had come. Having led the neophytes of his caucus into the fray, he then abandoned them--inexperienced, out-numbered, and terribly confused--to an inevitable and unhappy defeat.

The Unity Convention

It was the hope of the SP majority that Harrington, after suffering two major defeats in a matter of months at the hands of what he had called "an accidental majority," would reconsider his course and adopt a more accomodating attitude. It was especially hoped that the unity convention that was set for March 10-11, 1972 could be the occasion for terminating the bitter factionalism that had led to so much bad feeling. Moreover, Harrington's factional activities had created a quite anomalous situation in which the National Chairman of the SP was also the leader of a minority faction. Since the terms of the unity agreement stipulated that Harrington would remain Chairman of the merged organization, the majority didn't propose or even consider removing him from that position. But it was deemed thoroughly reasonable to attempt to work out some accomodation with Harrington so that in remaining as Chairman, he would also be a responsible and representative leader of the new organization.

With these considerations in mind, three leading members of the majority (Paul Feldman, Joan Suall and Irwin Suall) met with Harrington on January 8 to make several proposals which he could consider and present to his caucus which was to meet the following day. One proposal was that Harrington dissolve the "Coalition Caucus" while the majority dissolve the Committee for Socialist Unity which had been formed before the referendum. It was made clear that this proposal was not in any way intended to prevent Harrington or those aligned with him from speaking out and pressing their point of view on SP bodies and within the membership. It was also proposed that Harrington refrain in the future from

publicly criticizing the SP (as he had done in The New York Times Magazine article already referred to) and that as its Chairman he publicly present the positions of the organization.

These proposals were later presented in the form of "Guidelines for National Officers" which were unanimously ratified by the Unity Convention. According to the guidelines, national officers of the SP-DSF "are expected to represent the basic positions" of the organization. "Where this requirement results in a conflict based upon personal conscience, or other valid considerations," the guidelines went on, "there shall be consultation and resolution of the difficulty with the appropriate Party body or where time is too short, with fellow officers." These guidelines merely formalized the assumption that it was entirely appropriate for the SP-DSF, a thoroughly democratic organization to expect to be represented responsibly by its national officers.

The delegation that met with Harrington further proposed that he refrain from engaging in activities that would alienate close and fraternal organizations. This referred specifically to the "Labor-Social Issues Luncheons" which Harrington had helped initiate at the end of 1971 and for which he had agreed to serve as one of the Chairmen without consulting the SP. The luncheon series was in direct competition with a similar program of a fraternal organization, the League for Industrial Democracy (of which Harrington was Chairman of the Board). It also provided a forum for criticism of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Frontlash and elements in the labor movement (particularly the UFT, ILGWU, and the leadership of the AFL-CIO) with whom the SP had developed good relations.

It was further proposed that Harrington not endorse any candidates for public office without consultation and approval of the united organization, a guideline which would also apply to the National Secretary and editor of New America.

Finally, the delegation that met with Harrington expressed a willingness to consider further modifications in the organization's Vietnam position that would be more satisfactory to Harrington's grouping such as additional legitimate representation by them on Party bodies, or any other proposals Harrington might want to offer.

These proposals, the delegation subsequently wrote, were offered "not to exacerbate factionalism but to diminish it, not as a step toward removing Comrade Harrington as Chairman but as an effort to work out a way that he could remain Chairman with the support of the majority of the membership, in an atmosphere, if not of total agreement, at least of mutual respect and cooperation." Their expectation in regard to the responsibilities of the Chairman, they stated, "were the very minimum for any healthy and self-respecting political organization."

Harrington's response, issued in the form of a letter to the National Action Committee on January 11, was to demand a Party membership referendum on Vietnam, stating that not to permit a referendum would be "a divisive and dangerous thing." In stating this demand, virtually in the form of an ultimatum, he was fully aware that such a referendum would violate the constitutional stipulation prohibiting a referendum within six months of a convention. He had also previously acknowledged the fact that the unity referendum mandated that the Vietnam compromise become the position of the merged organization. Though the majority refused to have a referendum, it did accommodate to Harrington's wish that Vietnam be debated and voted on at the abbreviated SP Convention preceding

the Unity Convention. A one-hour debate was held at the Convention, and Harrington's group lost the vote by 53-38.

In his letter of January 11, Harrington also accused the three comrades who had met with him earlier in the week of "a certain factional spirit and a refusal to act in that fraternal and cooperative way which successful unity requires." He further accused them "of opposing me as Chairman in March" and of "sowing seeds of dissension which could lessen the effect of the unification they champion." His reply was uncooperative, to say the least, and evinced not the slightest willingness to work out some accommodation with the majority that might lessen the factional conflict within the SP. Nor did this attitude of belligerence and recalcitrance change in the weeks ahead. In a letter sent out by the Coalition Caucus before the Unity Convention, signed by Harrington and others, the SP majority was described as standing "on the Rightwing of American politics." (It is important to note here that several leaders of the majority contacted some of Harrington's more responsible supporters before the Unity Convention in a special effort to try to persuade them to influence Harrington away from this factional stance. The results, regrettably, were negative.)

The SP majority decided to deal with this intractable situation not by removing Harrington as Chairman but by adding Bayard Rustin as an additional Chairman of the SP and Charles S. Zimmerman as a third Chairman of the merged SP and DSF. The proposal was eminently reasonable, especially in light of Harrington's refusal to dissolve his faction. When the proposal to add Rustin as Chairman was offered to the SP Convention, Harrington and his followers reacted with dismay and moral outrage, as if a great injustice had been committed against a helpless and persecuted minority. Little concern was shown for the rights of the majority which also wanted to have a national spokesman. Instead of appreciation for the enormous advantage to the Party in having two such prestigious national figures as Rustin and Zimmerman as Co-Chairmen of the new organization, the Harrington group and their allies in the Debs Caucus reacted strictly in their factional interests.

At the Unity Dinner in honor of Rustin, held on March 11 immediately following the Unity Convention, Harrington reverted to a much more responsible posture, giving some people the impression that the worst was over. He praised Zimmerman as a trade unionist who was also a socialist and compared Rustin, a black leader "working, building, struggling, actually changing the lives of black people in America," to the Black Panthers, who had suddenly disappeared from the scene. He observed enthusiastically that "we are a vibrant, multi-tendency, sometimes contentious, argumentative movement--but a movement with a purpose." He concluded "with a thought about the symbolism of three chairmen:"

It makes me think back to the richness, the variety, the complexity of the American socialist tradition. This is a very difficult heritage which we have to interpret. The variety that we have to unify and contain and apply and, in a sense, revel in....

Our socialist movement has deep roots in this country. It is profoundly an American movement in the sense that our immigrant movement was American as well. It is a movement of enormous variety. A movement of Debs and Hillquit and Thomas. And I hope that having a united movement with three co-chairmen, will signal for us a continuation of that tradition

of broadness, variety and creativity that American socialism has brought to this country.

A more rapid turn-about could hardly be imagined. In the months ahead Harrington was again to transform his posture. No sooner had he raised expectations that he could be a responsible Chairman of the united socialist movement, than he again stepped up the factional war.

The Socialist International and The Vienna Conference

The occasion for the next skirmish was the temporary suspension of the SP-DSF's membership in the Socialist International (SI). On May 9, 1972 the National Office received a telegram from the SI asking whether the recently named SP-DSF, which the International considered to be a new organization, planned to apply for membership in the SI. In reply to this telegram, the National Secretary explained that the merger had not created a substantively new organization since the program and point of view of the majority of the leadership of the organization had remained basically the same. She expressed the hope that the application for membership was only a formality.

But on June 1 a letter was received from the General Secretary of the SI which said that at its meeting of May 22, the SI Bureau had voted to defer action on the membership status of the SP-DSF until after the SI Congress in Vienna at the end of June. The official reason given for the Bureau's action was that the SP-DSF membership was being considered as part of a series of proposed statute changes which might reduce the status of a number of small parties in the International. Through the help of friends in the International, however, it was learned that the Bureau member from the Finnish Party had raised political objections dealing with the SP-DSF's positions on foreign affairs, its small size and its alleged isolation within the American left. The National Office was told that unless the Bureau could be persuaded to change its decision at the next Bureau meeting which was to be held on June 11-12, the SP-DSF delegates to the Vienna Congress would not be seated with voting privileges.

The National Office and the National Co-Chairmen contacted a number of member parties to explain its case and prepared to send a representative to the Bureau meeting. Harrington contacted some Bureau members personally asking their help in changing its decision, but he also used the opportunity to make political criticisms of the Party. Then on June 8, several days before the Bureau was scheduled to meet, Harrington sent a letter to the National Committee charging that the SP-DSF was not the victim, but the cause of the SI's action. Its "factional line on foreign policy," he wrote, had "so alienated the overwhelming majority of the world's democratic socialists--LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER--that we face the problems currently before us."

Harrington further charged that the positions expressed in the Socialist Party's "Statement on Socialism, Democracy and Peace" at the Helsinki Council in 1971 "indicate that we do not speak for any significant sector of American Left opinion. I believe that these actual developments completely bear out the tactical line which I proposed for the Party within the International." He proposed that unless the Coalition Caucus was represented in the delegation to the Vienna Congress, that no delegation be sent at all. (For the record, Harrington was elected to serve on the U.S. delegation and said both before and after his election that he could not go to Vienna. Further, he had no alternative leader of the SP-DSF to suggest as a substitute who would represent his point of view,

despite the fact that the National Secretary asked him to submit such names to the NAC before the final election of SI Congress delegates.)

In his conclusion, he seemed to gloat over the party's troubles:

I would only conclude by noting that the comrades of the majority in their foreign policy positions have now placed themselves so far to the right of the world socialist movement that they have endangered our Party's fraternal relations with the international social democracy. These comrades might reexamine their politics in the light of this experience.

Harrington's concern with the proper tactics within the International, and his implied attitude of admiration for the SI, rang false to those who were familiar with some of his previous statements. Only two years before, in an article in Harper's Magazine (February, 1970) he had described the atmosphere at the 1969 SI Congress as "Tory, genteel, geriatric" which "seemed to dramatize how tame and bourgeois the International had become....The socialists, having begun their Congress with the hymn of the prisoners of starvation, carried it on in the full panoply of British banquet etiquette." Having demeaned the Socialist International in the non-socialist press, Harrington suddenly became remarkably respectful toward it when it provided a convenient foil for his criticism of the SP majority.

Had Harrington resisted for only a few days the temptation to attack his comrades, he might have been saved the embarrassment of having to eat his words yet another time. At the Bureau meeting of June 11 the National Secretary explained the extent and importance of the SP-DSF's relations with the American labor movement and why its influence is so much greater than its size. She also explained why the recent unity represented one of the most significant developments on the democratic left in America in many years. As for political questions, she observed that the SI is not a monolithic organization and that the only political criteria for membership should be a party's principled commitment to democratic socialism--a commitment the SP-DSF proudly fulfilled.

After a brief discussion the Bureau reversed its decision. As the Bureau minutes certified, in addition to the Austrian, French and Israeli Parties which had originally voted to support the SP-DSF at the May 22 meeting, several others including the British, German and Italian Parties switched their positions, and by a clear majority, the Bureau reversed itself. The SP-DSF was reinstated as a full member Party of the International. The Finnish Party, having initiated the move to deprive the SP-DSF of membership in the International, a move supported by the Swedish Party, remained opposed, as did the Danish representative and the International Council of Social-Democratic Women. In a letter received at the National Office on June 15, Tom McNally, the International Secretary of the British Labour Party (who had originally voted to defer SP-DSF membership) wrote:

As you will no doubt be aware the re-organization of the statutes of the Socialist International is going to be discussed at the Congress in Vienna.

Although your particular case is rather complex to explain in a letter, I can assure you you were the victims rather

then the cause. (emphasis added)

The SI Congress held later that month in Vienna further discredited Harrington's attack on the policies of the SP-DSF, especially his crude charge that the organization was "far to the right of the world socialist movement" and had "alienated the overwhelming majority of the world's democratic socialists - LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER." In one of the major debates at the Congress, dealing with the question of American involvement in world affairs, the SP-DSF found itself closer to the Germans, Austrians, British, Israelis and others than to the Swedes and the Finns. The repeatedly expressed theme of the latter two parties was that the U.S. was the center of world reaction and imperialism. Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky, the Prime Ministers of West Germany and Austria, respectively, made speeches against "Socialist anti-Americanism" which they argued would only increase the dangers to world peace. Paul Feldman, speaking for the SP-DSF, reiterated this point in a speech that was well received by many of the delegates. According to Arbeiter-Zeitung, the newspaper of the Austrian Socialist Party, "Feldman asked the comrades of other countries not to give up hope with respect to the U.S. Among the American people, the belief in democratic principles, human rights and social justice was widespread and there was, consequently a great potential for social democracy."

The SP-DSF was also in the majority on issues, such as the Middle East and Vietnam. A Mideast resolution, satisfactory to the Israeli point of view, was adopted without strong opposition. (This was a change from the previous year at Helsinki where a resolution, far less acceptable to the Israeli Labour Party would have been adopted were it not for the tireless lobbying efforts of Golda Meir.) On Vietnam, a balanced resolution was adopted against the opposition of the Swedes and Finns. While the resolution went further in some respects than the one adopted by the SP-DSF, it did call for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Indochina and demanded concessions from both the U.S. and North Vietnam. The SP-DSF also joined with representatives of the South Vietnamese Socialist Party in a statement demanding that all sides to the Vietnam conflict join in an immediate cease fire, followed by democratic elections in South Vietnam and the withdrawal of all foreign troops. The resolution also called on the U.S. to end its political support to the anti-democratic elements in South Vietnam. According to a report in The Manchester Guardian, "Perhaps the most cheering sight of the week was to see the South Vietnamese and the American delegation helping to thrash out a joint declaration on Vietnam..."

A reception was given for the U.S. delegation by the American Embassy in Vienna. It was attended by leaders of various other parties including those representing the British, French, Austrian and South Korean delegations. Several other delegations sent their regrets that they could not attend due to all night intensive negotiations on resolutions being presented the next day to the Congress. The SP-DSF delegation personally thanked the Ambassador, while presenting him with a letter protesting the silence of the U.S. government on President Thieu's violation of his country's constitution when he decreed emergency powers for himself without the consent of the National Assembly.

All of these events should be kept in mind in evaluating Harrington's behavior at the September 1972 National Committee meeting, where he called for the censure of Paul Feldman and Joan Suall, the SP-DSF delegates to the SI Congress, for allegedly violating and misrepresenting the Vietnam compromise in Vienna. Harrington virtually disrupted the meeting, shocking many of the former DSFers who were still unaccustomed to his tactics. (One of them, who chaired the meeting, remarked that he had chaired many political and trade union meetings for decades and had

never witnessed anything quite so outrageous.) The most incredible aspect of Harrington's assault was his charge that his side of the Vietnam compromise had been ignored in Vienna. As Irwin Suall, Samuel H. Frieman and others pointed out at the NC, if the compromise had been violated at all in Vienna, it was Harrington's position that was favored since the resolution adopted by the SI and supported by the SP-DSF leaned in the direction of Harrington's views.

Harrington knew his censure motion had no chance of passing. Its only purpose could have been to deepen the antagonisms within the Party. It is significant in this regard that his opponents had never introduced a censure motion against Harrington, although they were outraged by a number of his irreponsible violations of Party policy, such as his endorsement of the 1970 Congressional candidacy of Bella Abzug whom the SP had deliberately refrained from endorsing because of her ties with the totalitarian left; and his denunciation of Hubert Humphrey at a press conference preceding the League for Industrial Democracy (LID) luncheon in 1969 (which Harrington refused to attend) honoring the former Democratic Presidential candidate. (At the time Harrington was Chairman of the Board of the LID.)

Harrington's Resignation as Co-Chairman

Harrington was soon to attack the Party again, this time in the "bourgeois" press. The occasion for the new attack was the Party's critical preference of Democratic Presidential nominee George McGovern at the September 23-24 meeting of the National Committee. The resolution adopted by the NC was a middle-of-the-road position, between Harrington's view that the Party should enthusiastically support McGovern (though not endorse him since the Republicans might use a socialist endorsement against McGovern), and another view in support of neutrality. It also stressed:

...that there is a vital area of political activity in the 1972 elections on which the Democratic left is united--the fight to maintain and strengthen a liberal Congress. It is expected that our members and friends--no matter what their views on the top of the ticket--will actively and enthusiastically support the labor spearheaded drive behind liberals, especially in marginal House and Senate races...

James Glaser,

The resolution ultimately adopted was introduced by Paul Feldman, Will Stern and Joan Suall in order, in their own words, "to achieve an organizational consensus--one with which all groupings in the Party can live or at least tolerate. It aims to minimize factionalism and to achieve a unified Party position on the elections." The resolution noted that "the neo-isolationist and conservative precepts that underlie (McGovern's) code-words 'Come Home, America' run contrary to what is required to build a new America in a free world. Yet McGovern's and the Democratic Party Platform's general support for liberal economic programs--tax reform and the expansion of the public sector of the economy to create more jobs, among others--are obviously preferable to Nixonomics, which favor business and the wealthy over middle and low income Americans."

Since it was this resolution which subsequently led Harrington to charge that the SP-DSF was "doing the work of Richard Nixon," it is worth comparing the operative section just quoted with the parallel section in the SP's 1968 resolution endorsing Hubert Humphrey which was drafted by Harrington:

In our opinion...Hubert Humphrey is the least evil in the campaign. His continued defense of, his enthusiastic support of that horrible war in Vietnam which undermined the very social programs he advocated is not a recommendation for the Presidency. His vacillation in regard to the police brutality in Chicago recalls his earlier sponsorship of the Communist Control Act of 1954, a red-baiting law so anti-libertarian that the Department of Justice has not even dared to enforce it.

Yet all of these discouraging factors cannot change the reality; that Humphrey's victory is preferable to any other realistic possibility and that no strategy of protest will seriously forward the mass realignment which the country desperately needs.

This is a far more critical endorsement than the 1972 endorsement of McGovern. Yet no one said in 1968 that Harrington or the SP was "doing the work of Richard Nixon."

On October 14 Harrington drafted a letter to Bayard Rustin and Charles S. Zimmerman in which he stated his intention to submit a formal resignation from the post of National Co-Chairman within the next week. He said that he would make public his reasons for resigning, which were based on the discussion at the NC, not the position adopted there.

The National Secretary Joan Suall wrote Harrington on October 17 cautioning him about the manner of his resignation as Co-Chairman:

...I know that you would not want to hurt the Party itself by making a statement which would be misleading. The discussion held at the National Committee meeting, while revealing to those who attended, and of some interest to other members of the SP-DSF, cannot be considered by you or anybody else as relevant to the public position of the SP-DSF, which is a critical preference for Senator George McGovern, and certainly in no way can be construed as a pro-Nixon statement or as a position which implies that the Party is working for the victory of Richard Nixon. Your estimation of what individual leaders of the Party feel about the election may make it necessary in your opinion to resign your Co-Chairmanship of the Party, but it would be most unfair if that personal estimation of yours would be mixed up with your public statement of resignation. The fact is that a majority of the Party National Committee voted for the critical preference for McGovern's point of view, and that is a matter of record.

Suall asked Harrington, who had never been attacked publicly by his comrades, to be "fair towards the entire membership of the SP-DSF," and not to misrepresent the positions of the organization.

Harrington heeded these words of caution as a drunken driver observes road signs. His October 23 letter of resignation (which he released to The New York Times, The New York Post, The Village Voice, Time, Newsweek, The Nation, and the wire services) was an unsparing political assault on the

Party, accusing it not only of "doing the work of Richard Nixon" but also "backing Chiang, Batista...French colonialism, Diem, and the Generals in Indochina," as reactionary alternatives to Communism. This slanderous attack was printed on the first page of The Village Voice, as well as in The Nation, James Wechsler of The Post found material for a column in the Harrington resignation letter, and The Nation issued an editorial reminiscent of the Stalinist villification campaigns of the 30's and 40's. The Nation was effusive in its praise of Harrington and described his comrades as "torbidly anti-Communist...cold warriors before there was a cold war...slavish in their adherence to George Meany..." and "on Meany's payroll for years." It also compared the SP-DSF's attitude toward the New Politics movement as comparable to "the Communist Party's one-time obsession with 'social fascism.'" Far from repudiating this editorial, Harrington soon showed his appreciation to The Nation by submitting for publication an analysis of the election.

The New York Times' story on the resignation, which benefited from a personal interview provided by Harrington, mentioned several SP-DSF leaders and their organizational affiliations outside the Party with the implication that they and their organizations (the League for Industrial Democracy, Frontlash, and the A. Philip Randolph Institute) were "doing the work of Richard Nixon." Needless to say, Harrington did not mention to the Times reporter that three of the four leaders he attacked by name had voted for the McGovern endorsement, or that the Randolph Institute and Frontlash, by registering hundreds of thousands of black and low-income voters across the country, was doing more in the anti-Nixon struggle than Harrington and his grouping had ever done or could ever realistically hope to do. The reason for these omissions is clear: he staged his resignation not to enlighten the public about the SP-DSF, much less (as he claimed) to "vindicate the tradition of Debs and Thomas," but solely to damage the political work of his opponents within the SP-DSF.

Toward a Split

Though in his letter of resignation as Co-Chairman Harrington piously declared that "I am not going to dissipate my political energies in an intra-Socialist struggle," virtually all of his organizational energies in the succeeding months were devoted precisely to that. From the moment he resigned his post, the only serious question facing him and his followers with regard to the SP-DSF was whether to formally split from the organization. Many of those in Harrington's grouping wanted "out now," but he himself argued tentatively for staying in. The difference was not very significant, since during the eight months preceding Harrington's resignation from the organization, he established the nucleus for a new organization. His faction operated as "a party within a party" very much the way the Debs Caucus had done after the 1970 convention. Following the December '72 Convention, it published a newspaper, organized conferences, and, of course, continued to vilify the majority. It was only a matter of time before a formal split took place.

At the SP-DSF's first political National Convention, held in New York December 29-31, 1972, Harrington and his followers constituted a dwindling minority. They controlled about one-quarter of the delegates, to which they were able to add the remains of the Debs Caucus, giving them slightly under one-third of the Convention. (Some months later, in the application for affiliation of his new organization to the Socialist International, Harrington was to falsely claim that he represented one-third of the organization.) They lost the crucial Convention vote--a proposal to change the SP-DSF's name to Social Democrats, U.S.A.--by 72-34. Harrington charged that the organization, in adopting its

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new name and program, had abandoned "the tradition of Debs and Thomas" and even socialism itself. (He made a great protest against the name change, even though the Canadian Socialist affiliate to the Socialist International calls itself the New Democratic Party and many European Socialist Parties have "Social Democratic" in their titles.) What is clear is that he had already decided to abandon the organization for a new one that he was in the process of setting up.

The political shape of the new organization, which was called the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, was quite predictable. Having accused the majority of uncritical support for the leadership of the AFL-CIO, the DSOC proceeded to exhibit uncritical support for any opposition to that leadership. In particular, they sought patrons in the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees whose President, Jerry Wurf, constituted a kind of one-man New Politics opposition within the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO.

The DSOC's political "line" is put forth in the "Newsletter of the Democratic Left" which lists Harrington as the editor. Figuring prominently in the demonology of the DSOC are The Coalition for a Democratic Majority, Frontlash and the A. Philip Randolph Institute, organizations in which SDUSA members play important roles. The Committee on Political Education of the AFL-CIO is also part of this select company of suspect organizations. New Politics organizations such as Americans for Democratic Action and the New Democratic Coalition are always mentioned favorably. Within the Democratic Party the group claims to represent a unifying ground between the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and "the more intransigent McGovernites," but in practice it is fully identified with the ADA-NDC-McGovern wing of the Party. Its call for unity in the Party is a convenient way to state its opposition to a reduction of power (described as "purge") of the New Politics forces following the McGovern debacle. The concern for the well-being of the New Politics forces in the Democratic Party explains the great interest of the Harrington group in factional maneuvering within the labor movement itself. Whether it is Beirne against Barkan, Selden against Shanker, or Lucy against Rustin, the DSOC is interested in the success of anti-Meany insurgency that would broaden a New Politics base in the labor movement.

On foreign affairs the DSOC retains a ritualistic opposition to Communism, but in practice it maintains a "Third Camp" or neutralist stance with regard to East-West relations. Within America it identifies with the anti-interventionist, isolationist views of the New Politics movement, and within the Socialist International it orients toward the policies of the Swedish and Finnish Social Democratic Parties. One article in the Newsletter of April, 1973, by Scott Singer, sought to defend the German Jusos (Young Socialists) against charges of ultra-Leftism. An "editor's note" accompanying the article, "German Jusos and the Rebirth of the SPD Left," described the Jusos as a responsible left within the SPD. (According to a report in The New York Times on the Jusos Congress held in March, 1973, the group adopted resolutions "demanding the unilateral withdrawal of American troops from Europe," "condemning Israel's occupation of Arab territory," and "sharply criticizing Mr. Brandt's refusal to assail American involvement in Indochina." The Times report also pointed out that the delegates at the Congress "hooted down" Brandt's party representative who "got less applause than was given a visiting youth organization from Communist Bulgaria.")

Harrington's Resignation from SDUSA

In the June issue of the Newsletter, which appeared several weeks before

Harrington's resignation from the SDUSA, there is a call to attend the founding convention of "a new, nationwide socialist organization." His letter of resignation was thus anticipated, though its tone was more vituperative, its content more distorted, its recriminations more petty, than could have been expected, even from his previous attacks.

Part of the letter consists of a rehearsal of personal grievances: "the National Secretary forgot to tell me that I had been elected a member to the delegation to the Helsinki meeting" of 1971: "It is painfully obvious that there was no desire to get my signature" on the statement of the Committee for Detente for Freedom (which he then attacks in substance). An instance where Harrington is mentioned favorably in a column reprinted by both the AFL-CIO and the United Federation of Teachers--thus presumably confirming his pro-labor credentials--is also weaved into the text of the resignation letter. These personal references in Harrington's letter are noteworthy only insofar as they reveal the distinctly egocentric character of his political behavior, a quality that is highly unusual in a Socialist.

The unusually shrill tone of Harrington's letter seems to derive from the need to exaggerate political differences in order to justify so rash a decision as splitting the American Socialist movement. He is quitting the SDUSA, he says, because of its views on Vietnam--at a time when American participation in that terrible conflict is over and the issue no longer has the significance it once had in American life. (When it did have great significance, in 1970, he was willing to compromise differences.) He had written in 1969 that "If the Vietnam horror stops, it is a fair bet that domestic priorities will become much more important. And that is precisely the area in which collegiate and bread-and-butter liberalism coincide." Ironically, when the conflict did in fact stop, he continued to raise this divisive issue of Vietnam both within and without the socialist movement. Moreover, he intends to split the socialist movement because, he says, the SDUSA was indifferent to the candidacy of George McGovern--at a time when the McGovern candidacy is long over and responsible liberals, social democrats and trade unionists are looking for ways to unite the Democratic Party.

Most incredible is his claim that "I tried to work out a compromise with the current leadership of the SD whereby each of the main tendencies within the Party would work so that the others could function also." In light of the documented record of his relentless factionalism and his obstinate refusal to compromise with a majority that granted his grouping full democratic rights, that consistently offered the olive branch and compromised even when Harrington refused to do so--in light of this record, Harrington's claim that it was he who tried to ameliorate differences is an egregious distortion of the truth.

Harrington is able to point to only one "new lurch to the Right" to justify his decision to resign at this time. That "lurch" is the formation of the Committee for Detente with Freedom. In his attack on the Committee, Harrington's anti-totalitarian politics--views to which he dedicated a major part of his political life--seem, tragically, to disintegrate entirely.

The views put forth in the Committee's statement--in particular the demand that detente be accompanied by a lowering of the barriers blocking the free flow of information and ideas between East and West and by greater liberty for the peoples of the USSR and Eastern Europe--are virtually identical with the views expressed by almost every Western foreign minister (many representing Social-Democratic governments) at the recent Conference on Security and Coop-

eration in Europe held in Helsinki. Among the signatories of the Committee statement are two SD members -- Erazim Kohak and Steven Kelman -- who sided with Harrington at the 1972 Convention, as well as trade unionists such as Sol Stetin of the IWUA and Sol Chaikin of the ILGWU, and a broad range of intellectuals including two such different writers as Nat Hentoff and Arnold Beichman. And yet this Committee, which should (unlike Vietnam) constitute a non-controversial area of agreement within the Socialist movement, is the main political basis Harrington provides for his resignation.

Harrington's words speak for themselves:

...the Committee for Detente with Freedom -- how the title echoes Peace with Honor -- raises not simply the unassailable demand for the right of emigration for Russian Jews and all other people in the Soviet Union but also demands that the Russians ... "lower the dehumanizing barriers symbolized by the Berlin Wall." Does it actually help Soviet Jews to link their fate to a demand which is not properly addressed to the Russians at all and whose acceptance would represent nothing less than an East-West settlement in Central Europe? (Emphasis added)

Harrington's concern for Soviet Jewry is curious since he has not, to our knowledge, endorsed the Jackson Amendment which has received enormous support from the American Jewish community as the most important piece of legislation affecting Soviet Jews. His contention that the Committee is an example of SDUSA's "obsessive," "one-sided and fanatic anti-Communism" (what, one wonders, is "two-sided" anti-Communism?); and his further contention that setting conditions for detente is equivalent to opposing any detente at all, represent a departure from the international social democratic view of detente. Indeed, Gunter Grass, one of the most eminent social democratic intellectuals, has also warned against "a policy of detente at any price." For Harrington, it seems, freedom is too high a price to pay.

It would be crude to suggest that Harrington is out of sympathy with the demand for human rights in the Soviet Union. But at issue here is not one's personal sympathy but the policies one proposes to assist the freedom fight in the USSR. It is clear from Harrington's letter of resignation that he does not favor even the minimal demands put forth by the Committee for Detente with Freedom. In part, the source of this opposition is the political myopia which is evident in Harrington's statement that asserts that lowering "the dehumanizing barriers symbolized by the Berlin Wall" are "not properly addressed to the Russians at all." This statement betrays a remarkable ignorance of Soviet foreign policy. Whatever may be Harrington's motivations for behaving as he does -- and as we have suggested throughout this report, they have a good deal to do with his need to conform with prevailing liberal fashions -- his style is hardly cramped by an over-abundance of political insight.

In the months following the appearance of the Committee's statement, which was released on the eve of Brezhnev's June visit to the United States, the Soviet authorities stepped up their repression of intellectual dissidents. During this dark period, the Soviet Union's two leading intellectuals, the physicist Andrei Sakharov and the novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, courageously appealed to the West for support in their struggle. "There can hardly be mutual confidence," Sakharov said, echoing the Committee's statement, "if one of the parties resembles an immense

concentration camp." Announcing his support of the Jackson Amendment, Sakharov noted that "Detente has to take place with simultaneous liquidation of isolation." In the East-West dialogue, he added, "the Soviet Union is the interested party, and it is bluffing hard. It is very important that the Western countries should make full use of their trump cards. But they must understand that they are dealing with a very crafty partner who has the advantage of a totalitarian regime." He warned that detente without democratization would be "very dangerous...that would be cultivation and encouragement of closed countries, where everything that happens goes unseen by foreign eyes behind a mask that hides its real face. No one should dream of having such a neighbor, and especially if this neighbor is armed to the teeth."

Solzhenitsyn has observed that "people who steadfastly stand in the way of global threats to peace from all forms of violence risk being counted even among 'warmongers' and sometimes are deliberately slandered as such." Thus, Sakharov has been called a "warmonger" by the Kremlin, and Harrington has accused SDUSA of "obsessive," "one-sided, and fanatic anti-Communism." In answering his own accusers, Sakharov answers ours as well:

I call attention to the danger of seeming detente, not accompanied by increased trust and democratization. I consider this warning my right and duty. Is this warning really a statement against detente?

In recognition of the importance of Sakharov's statement, Solzhenitsyn has nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. He did so in a long essay entitled "Peace and Violence" in which he criticizes, more explicitly than in his Nobel Lecture, liberals in the West who adhere to "two moral standards" -- one for the Communist world and one for the non-Communist world. In light of Harrington's attack on the Committee for Detente with Freedom and other positions he has taken in his fight against SDUSA, it seems entirely appropriate to include him and his followers among those whom Solzhenitsyn criticizes so sharply:

There we have the whole hypocrisy of many Western protests. It is perfectly proper to protest if there is no danger to life, if the opponent is likely to back down and if you don't risk being denounced by the left (in fact, it is always better to protest together with the left.).

The same applies to the various forms of "neutrality" and "non-alignment" that have become so widespread. They require you always to bow and scrape toward one side, and always to kick the other side (which happens to be the one that feeds you!).

...it is not any difficulties of perception that the West is suffering, but a desire not to know, an emotional preference for the pleasant over the unpleasant. Such an attitude is governed by the spirit of complaisance and concession, and by the cowardly self-deception of comfortable societies and people who have lost the will to live a life of deprivation, sacrifice and firmness.

It is this "malady of the will of affluent people" which explains both the opposition to "detente with freedom" and the appearance of frivolous articles about the inconveniences of Disney World and the inconsiderateness of airline stewardesses.

One still hopes that the views expressed in Harrington's letter of resignation are a temporary aberration, vented in the heat of factionalism, and not a permanent shift of attitude. Be that as it may, his letter does not "extend and deepen" the tradition of Debs and Thomas," as he claims, but besmirches it beyond recognition.

Conclusion

Those on the periphery of the American socialist movement, and even many within who are removed from the center of activity, often do not find the internal problems experienced by the SD with Harrington to be readily comprehensible. The complexity of these problems has resulted in part from an enormous —————→

mous disparity between image and reality with respect to Harrington, a disparity which he has exploited to the fullest. In essence it is a disparity between moralism and morality, between morality as a tactical posture and morality as an integral part of political behavior and character. The irresponsibility of his actions and the contradictions between the views he expresses one week and those he formulates the next week would not merit extensive commentary were this merely a matter of an individual's alienation from SDUSA. The fact that his resignation constitutes an effort to split the American socialist movement amplifies the significance of his decision and has necessitated this lengthy account of what actually happened.

In conducting his fight against the majority of the SDUSA, Harrington has consistently sought to obfuscate issues by enveloping them in a fog of pietistic rhetoric and by deliberately misrepresenting the views of his opponents, often submitting such misrepresentations for publication in the non-Socialist press. Thus thousands of readers, who know little about the policies of SDUSA and virtually nothing about its internal disputes, learn that the organization is "doing the work of Richard Nixon," supports "Chiang, Batista, French colonialism, Diem and the Generals in Indochina," and has abandoned "the tradition of Debs and Thomas." Such behavior on the part of someone who has held a position of leadership in the Socialist movement is almost unprecedented, as well as unpardonable.

Most recently, Harrington has tried to obfuscate the issues and avoid serious debate by wrapping himself in the mantle of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and his policy of Ostpolitik. Harrington never concretely presents the policy of Ostpolitik he claims so thoroughly to support, but simply enshrines his solidarity with Brandt in rhetorical superlatives, i.e., "the West Germans, under the magnificent leadership of their socialist Chancellor [sic], Willy Brandt 'the politics of detente so magnificently carried out by Willy Brandt and the German Social Democracy.'" The SDUSA, Harrington asserts, opposes Brandt's policies and at the 1972 Convention "voted down a statement on detente which was composed--as they knew--of direct quotations from Willy Brandt." The fact that this section of the statement is included, almost word for word, in the current program of SDUSA--as he knows, is ignored by Harrington who is not concerned with accurately stating the truth but with distorting it in order to denigrate his opposition.

In order to maintain the impression of solidarity with Brandt, and still remain consistent with his own increasingly neutralist views on East-West relations, Harrington sidesteps the crucial issue of the American commitment to NATO symbolized most directly by the presence of 300,000 U.S. troops in Europe. To our knowledge, Harrington has never stated in writing a position on the Mansfield proposal to reduce U.S. troops in Europe, though he did note approval of Mansfield's action at an NAC meeting held at the time of a Congressional debate on the Amendment. The New Politics movement with which he identifies is quite strongly in favor of massive troop reductions, as is the overwhelming majority (48 out of 57) of the Democratic Senators.

Chancellor Brandt does not support this view, nor does he have the luxury (as does Harrington, who holds no position of responsibility) of side-stepping it. Writing in The New York Times on April 29, 1973 Brandt said that "Only recently, President Nixon convincingly argued that a weakening of the United States potential in Europe could not serve his peace strategy. To me this is unequivocal, for it is the simple and irrefutable truth. Withdrawal by the United States would threaten the substance of the negotiations." (emphasis

added). In an editorial during the 1972 Presidential campaign on the European policy of Senator McGovern (whom Harrington also supported unreservedly, at least on the European question since he never offered any criticisms of McGovern on this issue), The New York Times wrote:

The promise to consult the NATO allies before any troop reductions represents a vital and reassuring pledge; but it will not be enough to reassure Western Europe, which has evinced deep concern about Mr. McGovern's views. Not only the West Germans, who are the most nervous, but responsible British, Belgian, Dutch, Italian and even French leaders remain fearful that American troop withdrawals could arouse Soviet ambitions, destroy the emerging detente and ultimately endanger West Europe's security.

An official of West Germany's Defense Ministry was quoted in Newsweek (July 17, 1973) as saying that "McGovern would be a catastrophe for NATO." It is for this reason that Chancellor Willy Brandt, with whom Harrington is presumably so utterly in agreement, described the victory of Nixon as of "extraordinary significance for peace in the world." Precisely because Harrington was not in tune with Brandt's thinking on questions of world peace, he could not understand the anguish experienced by many of his comrades who opposed Nixon, but were also deeply troubled by the dangerous naivete of Senator McGovern.

At the SPD's convention held during April in Hanover, Brandt repudiated the policies of the Jusos by saying, "We won't deliver ourselves to the zealots." Quite unequivocally, he said that "We in the Social Democratic Party have no use for primitive 'anti' attitudes, and especially not for anti-Americanism."

We dwell on this matter not to prove that it is the majority of SDUSA, not Harrington, which stands with Brandt. Our policies, like Brandt's, speak for themselves. Our concern is to demonstrate, with this important and concrete example, the manner by which Harrington has distorted issues and misrepresented positions in carrying out his factional crusade.

Harrington has not only misrepresented the positions of his opposition; he has also misrepresented his own positions. Or to be more specific, he has often espoused contradictory political positions and has not always acted in accordance with some of his own professed beliefs. For example, if one assumes a certain logic and consistency in Harrington's political activity, it would stand to reason that he would have quite a low estimation of George Meany since he now finds it necessary to split from a socialist movement he claims is closely identified with the AFL-CIO leader. And, in fact, in his letter of resignation, Harrington condescendingly describes Meany as "out of touch with the new trends of thought and life," and also charges that "In its total identification with the Meany wing of the AFL-CIO, the SD leadership has been working to push American politics to the Right." In his application for affiliation to the Socialist International on behalf of the DSOC, Harrington describes Meany's foreign policy as "reactionary."

Harrington's public remarks about Meany, however, have often been unreservedly adulatory. In a column written on May 15, 1971 (about the time of Harrington's first letter elaborating his differences with the majority of the Realignment Caucus), he wrote that some day an historian "is going to look back on these times and discover an extraordinary truth: that George Meany and his associates are much more effective agents of social change than the intransi-

It is also inconceivable that Brandt has as positive an attitude toward the German Jusos as does the editor of "Newsletter of the Democratic Left."

gent, middle class ultra-radicals." On March 11, 1972 (more than four months after the formation of the Coalition Caucus), speaking at the Democratic Socialist Unity Dinner, he described the American labor movement, of which Meany is the foremost leader, as "our invisible social-democratic movement" which "is not ideologically, politically or formally socialist. And yet, in terms of its programs for the democratization of social and economic power, it fulfills in our country, it seems to me, the very same function that in Europe the labor movements affiliated with our sister parties of the Socialist International fulfill. The positions adopted by the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO just a month ago contradict labor's critics..." The following month, at a League for Industrial Democracy luncheon honoring Meany, Harrington said that "I think George Meany was speaking then (when he attacked a Nixon pro-corporation program) for the great majority of the American people--for trade unionists and consumers, for the entire nation....I hope that this incipient majority sitting out here and in this country, which stands for the kind of policies that George Meany has stood up for, that the LID has stood up for, that this incipient majority is going to be a political majority this November."

In Harrington's book *Socialism*, which was published the following month in May, 1972, he had more words of praise for Meany. He quoted a statement made by Meany in 1959 in which the AFL-CIO President said that if socialism means securing "for the great mass of the people, the workers, the wage earners, the farmers, and others, a better share of whatever wealth the economy produces, and that by providing that better share we provide a broad base of purchasing power to keep the economy moving forward--if that is socialism, then I guess I am a Socialist and have been a Socialist all my life." The conclusion drawn by Harrington is that:

...the president of the AFL-CIO has the same general outlook as the European social democracy. He speaks in American accents and his nation's history does not require him, or even allow him, to present himself as an anti-capitalist. The political content of his remarks, however, is quite analogous to that of mainstream European socialists. Too many scholars in the United States have heard only the rhetoric of the present labor movement--which is formally, even ritualistically, pro-capitalist--and have not bothered to examine either its programs or its political organizations. (emphasis added)

Elsewhere in the same book he writes that in 1968:

labor had clearly made an on-going, class-based political commitment and constituted a tendency--a labor party of sorts--within the Democratic Party....

Labor's orientation toward playing a role in the center of American politics, where one-man/one-vote was so important, had prevailed over narrow organizational concerns. The unions, in short, had created a social democratic party, with its own apparatus and program, within the Democratic Party. But how, then, can it be explained that this mass movement has remained invisible for so many intellectuals? (emphasis added)

And how, we may be permitted to ask, can Harrington reconcile these state-

ments with his current attacks on SDUSA and Meany, especially his charge that the SD, because of its "total identification" with Meany and the AFL-CIO leadership, "has been working to push American politics to the Right"? And how, we must also ask, if SDUSA is, as Harrington has charged, "far to the right of the world socialist movement" and has "alienated the overwhelming majority of the world democratic socialists - LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER," how is it possible to also write that George Meany "has the same general outlook as the European social democracy?"

The strategy followed by the SDUSA has been based precisely upon the concept that the American labor movement constitutes "a labor party of sorts" and "a social-democratic party" within the Democratic Party. It has been a strategy to support and strengthen this "labor party of sorts" within the coalition of forces constituting the Democratic Party. One consequence of this strategy is that today there is a deeper and more cooperative relationship between the American socialist movement and the labor movement than at any time in generations. This success is attributable, not least, to the fact that the leadership of the mainstream American labor movement, in particular George Meany, "has the same general outlook as the European social democracy," especially where it has advanced human needs over profits and the cause of democracy against totalitarianism of the left or the right.

The conflict within the American Socialist movement can be understood on many different levels. It has been an ideological conflict between different conceptions of the role of the labor movement and the liberal intelligentsia in American politics. Though Harrington claimed to have developed a theory explaining the role of the "New Class", he never precisely defined this grouping or explained its relevance to socialist theory and program. If, by the "New Class" he meant "nurses, teachers and aerospace workers," as he said at the 1971 YPSL Convention, he was certainly aware of his opponents' involvement with white collar trade unions. His frequent charge that his opponents ignored or were hostile to the "New Class" was really a form of name-calling and a means to avoid presenting a serious analysis of the new phenomenon he claimed to have discovered.

In fact, what was at issue was not the theoretical question of the nature of the "New Class" but the political question of the conflict between the labor movement and the New Politics. The division within the socialist movement can be understood as a sociological conflict, a class conflict of sorts, between a movement proudly identified with the labor movement and struggling for labor predominance in America, and a small grouping led by and utterly dependent upon an individual who, when forced to choose, is willing to subordinate labor to America's liberal cultural and political elite. The position of the SD majority has not been that the middle class is unimportant and should be ignored, but rather that the socialist movement must base itself on the organized working class, and that in instances of conflict between the organized working class and the middle class intelligentsia, its loyalties, in general, remain with the former. This view, we are confident, is squarely in the socialist tradition and is also the point of view of the social-democratic parties of Europe. It has been Harrington who has departed from socialist tradition by being more solicitous of "the new trends of thought and life" of the fashionable liberal elite than of the interests of the organized working class.

The dispute with the socialist movement has also been over different attitudes to conflicts between democracy and totalitarianism. In its opposition

to totalitarianism, the SDUSA has clearly identified itself with the West, with the social-democratic forces of the West to be sure, but also with the West as a repository and defender of the culture of freedom and democracy. While SDUSA is thoroughly committed to the struggle to reduce the power of America's corporate elite, and while it has unreservedly expressed its opposition to Rightist dictatorships and movements, it also believes that the struggle against these forces must be conducted in such a way that does not lead to the victory of Communist totalitarianism.

Harrington's "Third Camp" stance of neutralism in East-West relations is, on the surface, an untainted and morally "pure" position, but one which is virtually irrelevant to the actual conflicts taking place in the world or the relationships between various concentrations of power. His theory of "reactionary anti-Communism" was really only a way to have his cake and eat it too; to oppose both the reactionaries and the Communists without having to come to grips with the impure choices that are the stuff of most political situations. His opponents also opposed both the reactionaries and the Communists in Vietnam, but they were also concerned with strengthening the fledgling democratic elements in the country which would be eliminated entirely by a Communist victory. If this concern led them to oppose unilateral and unconditional American withdrawal, this did not mean--as Harrington charged--that they supported the reactionaries, any more than his support for unconditional and unilateral American withdrawal meant that he supported the Communists. But these distinctions were lost in the vehemence of his attacks.

His reluctance to defend the West under any circumstances became apparent in his attack on the Committee for Demote with Freedom whose statement set forth the most enlightened and progressive anti-totalitarian views. By describing SDUSA's position as "one-sided and fanatic anti-Communism," he left the impression that anti-Communism per se is "one-sided and fanatic," a view that is not uncommon today in certain "progressive" circles.

Finally, the conflict with SDUSA has been between two different conceptions of the American socialist movement. In Harrington's view, the chief function of the socialist movement is to "present a socialist perspective." As he wrote in one of his factional letters, "The distinctive contribution we can make to American life is not in the force of our activism...what we, a tiny Party, possess as our greatest advantage is our socialist perspective." In his letter of resignation as Co-Chairman, he wrote that "We do not bring the unions great numbers or huge financial resources; we do bring them ideas." Of course, the SD does not bring the unions great numbers or huge financial resources--but where we differ crucially with Harrington is that we have more than ideas to offer. In other words, the socialist contribution to American political life, according to Harrington, is ideas, as divorced from the impurities of active involvement in political strife. This concept parallels dangerously an old elitist concept of many intellectuals who have contempt for the workers who grind away at making a living and do not share the creative genius of the "New Class."

The Social Democrats, U.S.A. has a perspective. It also has very good political ideas; ideas that are both complex and clear, intelligent and practical and it believes it cannot make the mistake as has happened in the past of thinking socialists can hand down from on high these ideas and take no responsibility for helping transform them into reality. Further, it is a movement with growing influence in American affairs. In the labor movement and in the Democratic Party, in the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Frontlash, the Coalition

for a Democratic Majority, the League for Industrial Democracy, the Youth Committee for Peace and Democracy in the Middle East, the Jewish Labor Committee and the Workmen's Circle, its members are effectively implementing a social-democratic strategy for America.

SDUSA has now laid the foundation for the rebirth of American Social Democracy as a serious political force. It regrets the resignation of Harrington, and it deplores his gratuitous destructive effort to split the American Socialist movement. But this split is now a reality, unless Harrington and his followers reverse their course which we would welcome. To concentrate our energies further on the negativism of internal strife would be counterproductive.

We have presented this report to clear the record. Having done so, we can now turn our full attention to attaining our ultimate goal of building Social Democracy in America.

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